

Message Text

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SUBJ: NEED TO EXPEDITE BORDER CROSSING AT SAN YSIDRO

1. AS BACKGROUND TO ONGOING DISCUSSIONS OF A SECOND BORDER CROSSING AT TIJUANA/SAN YSIDRO, THE CONGEN WISHES TO REPEAT ITS VIEW THAT, ALTHOUGH THE PROJECT IS NECESSARY, THE IMMEDIATE AND URGENT ISSUE IS NOT A SECOND BORDER CROSSING BUT THE PROVISION OF FULL STAFFING AND CONSEQUENT ELIMINATION OF DELAYS AT THE EXISTING PORT OF ENTRY FACILITY IN SAN YSIDRO. WE BELIEVE VIRTUALLY ALL INTERESTED U.S. AND MEXICAN PARTIES IN THIS AREA SHARE THIS OPINION. THE TIJUANA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, FOR EXAMPLE, IS WORKING WITH THE SAN DIEGO CHAMBER OF COMMERCE IN PREPARATION OF A RESOLUTION TO THE U.S. CONGRESS ASKING FOR MORE PERSONNEL FOR THE SAN YSIDRO POE. PARENTHETICALLY, WE FIND SOME INCONGRUITY IN LEARNING THAT THE USTS IS SPENDING MONEY IN TIJUANA TO ADVERTISE THE ATTRACTIONS OF TRAVEL IN THE U.S. (A STEP WHICH IN THIS AREA IS GILDING THE LILY, AT BEST), WHILE A MEXICAN COLLEAGUE TELLS US HE CANCELLED PLANS TO EAT OUT IN SAN DIEGO BECAUSE HE COULD NOT TOLERATE A 30-60 MINUTE WAIT AT THE BORDER.

2. INTRINSIC TO THIS ISSUE, THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTION WHICH THE USG COULD IMMEDIATELY MAKE TO LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ON BOTH SIDES OF THE BORDER IS TO HAVE IN PLACE SUFFICIENT CUSTOMS AND INS STAFF TO ENSURE NO MORE THAN A NOMINAL WAIT FOR
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PAGE 02 TIJUAN 00207 241544Z

TRAVELERS GOING NORTH. WE BELIEVE THAT MANY LESS HARDY TRAVELERS - BOTH AMERICAN AND MEXICAN - ARE DETERRED FROM CROSSING THE BORDER - AND SUBSEQUENTLY SPENDING THEIR MONEY - BY FOREKNOWLEDGE OF THE LINES THEY MAY FACE (FOR EXAMPLE, ON SUNDAY, MARCH 19 AT 1800 HOURS THE WAIT WAS ALMOST ONE HOUR). THE MUTUALITY OF INTERESTS HERE CANNOT BE UNDERSTATED. AMERICAN TOURIST SPENDING IN BAJA BRINGS JOBS TO THE AREA IN MEXICO MOST IMPACTED BY THE MOVEMENT

OF ILLEGAL MIGRATION TO THE UNITED STATES. AT THE SAME TIME, MOST OF THE DOLLARS SPENT IN BAJA QUICKLY FIND THEIR WAY BACK TO CALIFORNIA FOR BOTH BUSINESS AND PLEASURE SPENDING.

3. TO CITE SPECIFICS ON POE STAFFING SHORTAGES: INS SAN YSIDRO HAS AN AUTHORIZED FORCE OF 65 OFFICERS FOR ALL PURPOSES. THEY HAVE ONLY 44 NOW AND COULD USE 75 (EIGHT NEW OFFICERS ARE DUE SOON BUT WILL NOT BE AVAILABLE FOR FULL DUTY FOR FOUR TO FIVE MONTHS). TO PUT AS MANY INSPECTORS IN THE LINE AS HAS CUSTOMS, WHICH INS BELIEVES DESIRABLE, INS WOULD NEED 100 OFFICERS. AT PRESENT ITS COMMITMENT IS TO MAN FIVE LANES (THERE ARE 24) 7 DAYS A WEEK FOR 16 HOURS EACH DAY.

4. CUSTOMS SAN YSIDRO HAS AN AUTHORIZED CEILING OF 123 INSPECTORS (THIS AND FIGURES BELOW DO NOT INCLUDE SUPERVISORS), BUT HAS ONLY 97 ON HAND AND EXPECTS AN ADDITIONAL 10. IT WOULD LIKE 133 INSPECTORS, WHICH WOULD MATCH THE NUMBER ON HAND IN 1973.

5. THIS IS NOT A MESSAGE PLEADING OTHER AGENCIES' STAFFING NEEDS. ITS PURPOSE IS TO POINT UP AN EXPENSIVE AND UNNECESSARY BORDER IRRITANT WHICH COULD BE EASILY CORRECTED.

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